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2. *Ascent of the Niger in September and October, 1864.* By LIEUTENANT CHARLES KNOWLES, R.N.

Communicated by the FOREIGN OFFICE.

THIS is an official account of a voyage up the Niger in H.M.S.S. *Investigator*, addressed by the writer to his commanding officer, Commodore E. Wilmot, C.B. The expedition was accompanied by Bishop Crowther and his suite, who were landed at Gbebe on the eighth day of the voyage from the mouth of the river, and re-embarked on the return of the steamer. As despatch was necessary in the ascent of the river, the chiefs at Abo, Onitsha, Idda, and Gbebe, were not visited; but they were informed that it should be done on the return of the vessel. There is no high ground below Idda, the country generally being flat and uninteresting, but above that place it is more open and undulating, with clear spaces appearing like park-land; the bottom of the river below the confluence becomes rocky, and the mountains, the principal of which are Mounts Oro, Okiri, and King William's Range, rise to the height of 1400 feet, and are wooded to the summits. The principal feature of the hills in this part of the country is that they are generally table-topped; the soil appears of a reddish colour. On the 8th of September (the ninth day of the voyage) the *Investigator* arrived at Lukoja, where Lieut. Knowles saw Dr. Baikie, and found him in good health and the settlement in a satisfactory condition. The intelligence of Lieut. Bedford's death was unfortunately too true, he having died at this place on the 23rd of February previous, according to Dr. Baikie, of disease of the brain. This settlement, from its central and commanding position just above the confluence of the rivers Kwára and Binué (or Tshadda), and its healthy situation, will probably become of great importance to England if the Niger be taken up in earnest as an outlet and highway for the commerce of Central Africa. To this end it has been chosen by Dr. Baikie, who has spent both time and money in making it what it is. Māsāba, the Mohammedan King of Nupé, granted him permission to choose this site, and has always been his protector and friend. There was formerly a village here, called Egára; but it was deserted by the inhabitants before Dr. Baikie's arrival, as they were afraid of Māsāba's people, and Lukoja has arisen in its stead. The houses are built in the usual circular form, with conical roofs. They are strongly built and in detached compounds, as a preservative against fire. Dr. Baikie's houses are spacious and well ventilated, and of the same construction, viz. mud walls and thatched roofs. The population is about 100: they appear cheerful and contented, and pay great deference to Dr. Baikie, who is their friend as well as chief, and his departure is much regretted by them all. He reads the Church service on Sundays in Hausa and English, governs them as far as possible by European maxims, and has adopted many of the native customs and dress, and is a proficient in the Hausa language. Lukoja could be easily fortified if necessary; the hills called Mount Stirling being a capital spot for a redoubt, which would entirely command the Kwára. The only drawback to the situation is that it is too much shut out from the southwesterly breezes by Mount Lukoja (which is 1100 feet in height), and the hills in the rear; this makes the port at Gbebe the cooler of the two. The high table-mountain range to the northward, called Lūmadé, extends from 8 to 10 miles, and has several farms and villages on its summit. The ground is uneven, with detached lumps of stone, and the soil apparently red sandstone, but as earthquakes are unknown there is no trace of a volcanic nature: some specimens of the stone are very heavy, and resemble ironstone. The grass on the slopes and other parts, although appearing at a distance like park-land, is in reality much longer and coarser than in Europe, reaching generally up to the knees, and sometimes above the head. The air is dry and healthy; there is heavy dew at night, but an entire absence of that damp and relaxing feeling prevalent on the seacoast.

Persons should not be exposed to the sun between 7:30 A.M. and 3:30 P.M., nor to the night dews; although during this season there appears to be little or no malaria. This is the cool season; but even now the thermometer, at about 2 P.M., which is the hottest time, is about  $96^{\circ}$  to  $98^{\circ}$  in the shade. Tornadoes occur here at intervals of about three days: if rising in the E.N.E. quarter, they generally pass over the Binué towards Gbebe; if from N.N.E. they pass behind the Lúmadé range; but if lightning and a threatening appearance arise in the N.E., they are pretty certain to come over the settlement. The water is good here and the soil such that every African product can be cultivated. Persons have frequently come up from Gbebe to Lukoja for their health. Pine-apples, yams, plantains, papaw, guinea-corn, rice, cassava, and coco are grown here; also a species of creeper with a large oval pod, in which is a fibrous substance called country sponge, and used for that purpose. The chea-butter tree is also of spontaneous growth here. Egga, a town some distance up the Kwára, is the great ivory mart; but if a factory were established at Lukoja, quantities would doubtless be brought down here from the Adamáwa country, which is about 300 miles up the Binue river. There is a large palm-oil district a few miles higher up the river; there would, therefore, be no lack of trade in that product. There are many animals here: a leopard is now reported as being in the neighbourhood, and hyenas pay occasional visits at night. Elephants, buffaloes, and deer, frequent the country in the rear of the hills, but do not come within sight of the settlement. Not a single crocodile or river-horse has been seen yet; they generally frequent the creeks and marshes during the flooding of the river; but herds of the latter animal are seen on the sand-banks when the water falls, which it does here as much as 40 feet in the dry season. It is now the breeding season for hippopotami, and, indeed, the end of the rains is the breeding-time for all animals. We hear of a peculiar vegetable poison, called by the natives gon-gwámi, and used by them on their arrows and darts. It is said to kill an elephant before he can run 50 yards after being wounded. Doves and guinea-fowl are the only feathered game we have yet heard of; ibis and a species of wild-duck are found in the marshes. After sunset there is an incessant hum of insects, tree and marsh frogs, crickets, &c. The latter emit a most curious sound, very like the sharp tink-tink of a stone-cutter's hammer and chisel. On the 12th of September Lieut. Knowles proceeded up the Kwára (accompanied by Dr. Baikie, who wished to visit the King of Nupé), and on the following day arrived off the town of Egga. During the passage from the mouth of the river to Egga the vessel had touched the ground but two or three times very slightly, and that only for a few moments. At daylight on the 14th September the voyage was continued towards Ekpogi (marked Fofó in the chart); about a mile and a half beyond this village the river leading to Wunagi, about eight miles from Bida, falls into the main stream. The former second master of the vessel, Mr. W. H. Adlam, who traversed this river with Lieut. Gambier in a boat during last year's expedition, having pronounced it navigable for vessels of the *Investigator* class, Lieut. Knowles determined to proceed to Wunagi. He accordingly entered the river at 6:55 A.M. (the native name is Tshántshegga), but found it most intricate and tortuous, there being no fewer than 115 bends, with their corresponding reaches, over a distance of 20 miles in a straight line. They grounded several times, and did not arrive at Wunagi until 10:50 A.M. on the 16th, fortunately without any damage to the vessel's hull or machinery. The river is in some places 80 yards wide, at others not more than 20. There is in most places plenty of water on the deep side of the river; but the greatest difficulty felt was in turning so long a ship as the *Investigator* round the sharp bends against a current averaging two knots an hour. Lieut. Knowles, however, had no doubt that a shorter vessel with a powerful steering-apparatus would be adapted to the navigation of this river. A messenger having been despatched to Bida,

the capital of Nupé, to acquaint King Māsāba of their arrival, horses and an escort were sent down on the afternoon of September 17; and a party, including Lieut. Knowles, Dr. Baikie, Lieut. Bouchier, and several of the officers, proceeded to Bida. They remained there until the evening of the 26th, during which time they had several very satisfactory interviews with the king. This city, built by Māsāba within the last five years, is situated in a valley, surrounded by detached table-topped hills of from 80 to 150 feet in height. It is surrounded by a wall of 10 miles in circumference, which is 14 feet in height, built of mud, and defended by a deep ditch. There are nine gates to the city, which is said to contain 50,000 inhabitants: the houses are of a circular shape, and from 10 to 30 feet in diameter, with conical bamboo-roofs thatched with palm-leaves. In the upper part of the city each cluster of huts is enclosed in a mud wall or compound, as before mentioned in the description of Lukoja. The king's compound is about 120 paces square, and contains stables and store-houses for goods. The party were introduced to him on their arrival, and found him seated on a mat, flanked by cushions of Hausa and English manufacture. He is a fine-looking negro, apparently about fifty years of age, with a dignified deportment, and immeasurably superior to the so-called "kings" on the sea-coast and in the provinces nearer the mouth of the Kwára. Both he and his followers are Mohammedans: they are nominally subject to the kingdom of Sokotu, which is situated to the northward of Nupé. The natives are heathens; but no images or idols were observed in the town, and there is an entire absence of the human sacrifices, fetich-worship, and other abominations common among the coast and river tribes. Domestic slavery is an institution of the country; but the export of slaves is unknown. The dress of the wealthier portion of the people consists of a robe or mantle (like a surplice), reaching nearly to the feet, full wide trousers, sandals, and a cotton cap; the poor of both sexes wear a simple cloth wrapped round the body. The population appear industrious, and drunkenness and idleness to be foreign to their character. They are clever workers in iron, leather, cotton-goods, and mat-making; the inferior articles of dress are interwoven with silk in a tasteful manner. During several satisfactory interviews with King Māsāba, at which presents were interchanged, he dwelt much on the desire he and his people had to commence a regular trade with the English people, and was anxious that steamers should be sent up every year with goods, and a permanent factory established at Lukoja. He spoke often of the esteem in which Dr. Baikie was held by himself and the people generally, and much regretted to hear of his intended departure. Among several other presents entrusted to Lieut. Knowles, were a mat and cloth of native manufacture for Her Majesty the Queen, with whom he always hoped to be on friendly terms. Māsāba's army and all his best horses were besieging a revolted town in the interior, which they soon hoped to recapture. He is evidently bent on extending his rule further down the Kwára, hinting that at no distant period he would be master of the whole river. On the 26th Lieuts. Knowles and Bouchier returned to Wunagi and proceeded to Egga in the ship's gig, the *Investigator* having left a few days previously on account of the fall of the River Tshantshegga, which by the 27th had subsided 4 or 5 feet. Dr. Baikie returned to the ship on the 28th, and they proceeded to Lukoja. From the 5th to the 13th of October the *Investigator* remained at Lukoja, to enable Dr. Baikie to prepare for his return to England and transfer the government of the settlement to Lieut. Bouchier. Mr. Thomas V. Robins, an artist who had accompanied the expedition, here volunteered to remain at Lukoja as a companion to Lieut. Bouchier, and to assist him in the management of the settlement. They were properly and comfortably located, and in good health and spirits when the expedition left the place. On the return of the *Investigator* down the river, the Kings of Gbebe, Idda, Onitsha, and Abo were visited, who all professed friendship for the English and a desire for trade;

and the Bishop succeeded in obtaining permission from the Attah or King of Idda (the Egara country), for a missionary establishment to be formed there : arrangements were also made for a school and station at Lukoja. The expedition arrived at the mouth of the river, on the 18th October, without the loss of a man, and the officers and men in good health and spirits.

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3. *New Explorations in Australia.* Extract from the 'Register' of Adelaide, South Australia, Sept. 17th, 1864.

Communicated by F. S. DUTTON, Esq., F.R.G.S.

THE great work of exploration, in which South Australia during the last twenty years has taken so prominent a part, is now about to be carried on with fresh energy. Mr. Stuart's discoveries are to be extended within the colony by Major Warburton, and beyond the colony by Mr. A. Ball. Major Warburton's expedition, which is being fitted out by the Government, in accordance with resolutions passed by both Houses of Parliament, is in the first place intended for the examination of the country beyond Mount Margaret. It is proposed to proceed to the northeastward of that point, in order to ascertain whether or not there is any truth in the report as to the existence of a large river flowing into Lake Eyre; and when that part of the colony has been examined, it is intended to explore to the westward with the view of connecting the interior of "No Man's Land" and the adjacent country with either Fowler's Bay or Denial Bay, on the coast. These are to be the general objects of the expedition, and it is expected that they will be accomplished within four months. Full instructions, however, with regard to the conduct of the undertaking will be laid before Parliament as early as possible.

The other expedition to which we have referred is to be fitted out by private enterprise. The friends of Mr. A. Ball, whose scheme was laid before the public last year, are persevering in their endeavours to collect sufficient funds for the equipment of his party, and there is every prospect of their being successful. Should this be the case, Mr. Ball will start as early as possible. His plan is to proceed almost in a direct line from Mount Margaret to Shark's Bay on the western coast. He would thus cross the only extensive portion of the continent which yet remains unexplored. The eastern side of Central Australia is now well known, and from south to north the country has been opened by various explorers. There remains, then, only the unexplored region to the westward, and it is this which Mr. Ball now proposes to examine. Hitherto it has remained unnoticed, chiefly from the circumstance that explorers have devoted all their energies to the task of finding a route to the northern coast. Leichhardt was the only one who at an early date began to consider the practicability of crossing the continent from east to west—from Moreton Bay to Shark's Bay; but he perished without accomplishing this task, and one-half of the country which he intended to explore still remains completely unknown. A few years ago it was proposed in Victoria that this work should be renewed, and there was a talk of sending the Burke and Wills expedition to the westward instead of to the northward. The proposition, however, was abandoned, and the idea of reaching the western coast from Central Australia was given up.

The present is a favourable time for reviving this matter. The fact that a Government expedition is about to explore the country recently known as "No Man's Land" is a strong reason in favour of this further exploration to the westward. The explorers who undertake the larger work will have something to fall back upon in case they should meet with difficulties, either from the presence of large numbers of natives or from want of water. The knowledge that Major Warburton and his party were in the rear would be a source of en-